

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS,
Washington, DC, November 18, 2003.

Hon. PETER S. WATSON,
President and Chief Executive Officer, Overseas
Private Investment Corporation, Wash-
ington, DC.

DEAR MR. WATSON: The House of Rep-
resentatives may soon consider H.R. 3145,
legislation to reauthorize the operations of
the Overseas Private Investment Corpora-
tion (OPIC) through September 30, 2007. It is
my understanding that nothing in this reau-
thorization would alter in any way OPIC's
statutory obligations or existing practices
with respect to issues regarding worker
rights. I request that you provide the Com-
mittee, in writing, with confirmation of this
understanding and a complete summary of
any and all of OPIC's existing statutory obli-
gations and practices with regards to worker
rights.

I look forward to hearing from you.
Best regards,

BILL THOMAS,
Chairman.

OVERSEAS PRIVATE
INVESTMENT CORPORATION,
Washington, DC, November 18, 2003.

Hon. WILLIAM M. THOMAS,
Chairman, Committee on Ways and Means,
House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN THOMAS: Thank you for
your letter of November 18, 2003. Your letter
referenced H.R. 3145, legislation to reauthor-
ize the operations of ah Overseas Private In-
vestment Corporation (OPIC) through Sep-
tember 30, 2007, and it requested both a con-
firmation that nothing in this reauthorization
would alter in any way OPIC's statutory
obligations or existing practices with respect
to issues regarding worker rights and a sum-
mary of such existing statutory obligations
and practices.

OPIC shares your understanding that H.R.
3145 would not alter in any way OPIC's sta-
tutory obligations or existing practices with
respect to issues regarding worker rights. On
the country level, under current law and
OPIC practice, OPIC "may insure, reinsure
guarantee, or finance a project only if the
country in which the project is to be under-
taken is taking steps to adopt and imple-
ment laws that extended internationally rec-
ognized workers rights" to workers in that
country, unless "the President determines
that such activities by OPIC would be in the
national economic interests of the United
States." (22 U.S.C. 2191a(a)).

In addition, OPIC is prohibited from pro-
viding "assistance for any program, project,
or activity that contributes to the violation
of internationally recognized worker rights"
of workers in the recipient country. (Sec. 533
of the Consolidated Appropriations Resolu-
tion, 2003.) In this context, "internationally
recognized worker rights" means "the right
of association; the right to organize and bar-
gain collectively; [and] a prohibition on the
use of any form of forced or compulsory
labor." Sec. 507(4) of the Trade Act of 1974 (19
U.S.C. 2467(4)). "Internationally recognized
worker rights" also includes "a minimum
age for the employment of children, and a
prohibition on the worst forms of child labor
...; and acceptable conditions of work with
respect to minimum wages, hours of work,
and occupational safety and health" (Sec.
507(4) of the Trade Act of 1974) to the extent
"commensurate with the level of develop-
ment of the recipient country and sector,"
and in a manner that "shall not preclude as-
sistance for the informal sector in such
country, micro and small-scale enterprise,
and smallholder agriculture." (See 533 of the
Consolidated Appropriations Resolution,
2003.

OPIC's statutory obligations and current
practice also require it to include language
in its contracts requiring eligible investors
to observe the applicable laws of the recipi-
ent country. In all contracts which OPIC en-
ters into with eligible investors, OPIC in-
cludes the following language, "The investor
agrees not to take actions to prevent em-
ployees of the foreign enterprise from law-
fully exercising their right of association
and their right to organize and bargain col-
lectively. The investor further agrees to ob-
serve applicable laws relating to a minimum
age for the employment of children, accept-
able conditions of work with respect to min-
imum wages, hours of work, and occupa-
tional health and safety, and not to use
forced labor. The investor is not responsible
under this paragraph for the actions of a for-
eign government." (22 U.S.C. 2191a(a)(1)).

Best regards,

PETER S. WATSON,
President & CEO.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, I support
the reauthorization of the Overseas Private In-
vestment Corporation (OPIC) and the impor-
tant role it plays in assisting emerging markets
in developing countries and promoting U.S.
exports, which creates jobs here at home.
OPIC's operations and activities have sup-
ported over 250,000 U.S. jobs and produced
\$64 billion of U.S. exports.

With this important role comes a responsi-
bility to ensure that projects promoted by
OPIC uphold adequate environmental, labor,
and human rights standards, I am pleased that
OPIC is taking steps to ensure this responsi-
bility is upheld. The Report accompanying this
legislation outlines the International Relations
Committee's expectation that OPIC continue
its work towards implementing an "account-
ability mechanism" and "transparency initia-
tive."

The accountability mechanism should be in
the form of an independent position within
OPIC that evaluates and reports on environ-
mental, social, labor and human rights im-
pacts. The transparency initiative should make
certain that interested stakeholders have ap-
propriate access to information concerning
OPIC's projects. This level of transparency will
strengthen OPIC's programs and policies.

I expect this Congress and the International
Relations Committee to monitor OPIC's
progress towards these initiatives through
hearings and reports. I look forward to contin-
ued dialogue with OPIC on these issues to
strengthen the link between economic devel-
opment, and environmental and social
progress.

Mr. BEREUTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield
back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The
question is on the motion offered by
the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. BE-
REUTER) that the House suspend the
rules and pass the Senate bill, S. 1824.

The question was taken; and (two-
thirds having voted in favor thereof)
the rules were suspended and the Sen-
ate bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on
the table.

RECOGNIZING THE 5TH ANNIVER- SARY OF THE SIGNING OF THE INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM ACT OF 1998

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr.
Speaker, I move to suspend the rules

and agree to the resolution (H. Res.
423) recognizing the 5th anniversary of
the signing of the International Reli-
gious Freedom Act of 1998 and urging a
renewed commitment to eliminating
violations of the internationally recog-
nized right to freedom of religion and
protecting fundamental human rights,
as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. RES. 423

Whereas the people of the United States
enjoy and respect the freedom of religion and
believe that the fundamental rights of all in-
dividuals shall be recognized;

Whereas fundamental human rights, in-
cluding the right to freedom of thought, con-
science, and religion, are protected in nu-
merous international agreements and dec-
larations;

Whereas religious freedom is a funda-
mental human right and all people are en-
titled to believe, practice, and worship accord-
ing to their conscience;

Whereas the right to freedom of religion is
expressed in the Declaration on the Elimina-
tion of All Forms of Intolerance and Dis-
crimination Based on Religion or Belief,
adopted and proclaimed by the United Na-
tions General Assembly Resolution 36/55 of
November 22, 1981; the Helsinki Accords; the
International Covenant on Civil and Polit-
ical Rights, done at New York on December
16, 1966, and entered into force March 23, 1976;
the United Nations Charter; and the Uni-
versal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted
and proclaimed by the United Nations Gen-
eral Assembly Resolution 217(A)(III) of De-
cember 10, 1948;

Whereas the freedom for all individuals to
adopt, believe, worship, observe, teach, and
practice a religion individually or collec-
tively has been explicitly articulated in Ar-
ticle 18 of the Universal Declaration of
Human Rights and Article 18(1) of the In-
ternational Covenant on Civil and Political
Rights;

Whereas religious persecution is not con-
fined to a country, a region, or a regime; but
whereas all governments should provide and
protect religious liberty;

Whereas much of the world's population is
continually denied or restricted in the right
to believe or practice their faith;

Whereas religious persecution often in-
cludes confinement, separation, humiliation,
rape, enslavement, forced conversion, im-
prisonment, torture, and death;

Whereas October 27, 2003, marks the 5th
anniversary of the signing of the International
Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (22 U.S.C. 6401
et seq.), creating the Office of International
Religious Freedom in the Department of
State and the United States Commission on
International Religious Freedom and result-
ing in a greater awareness of religious perse-
cution both in the United States and abroad;
and

Whereas the United States recognizes the
need for additional domestic and inter-
national attention and action to promote re-
ligious liberty: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representa-
tives—

(1) recognizes the 5th anniversary of the
signing of the International Religious Free-
dom Act of 1998 (22 U.S.C. 6401 et seq.); and

(2) urges a renewed commitment to elimi-
nating violations of the internationally recog-
nized right to freedom of religion and pro-
tecting fundamental human rights.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursu-
ant to the rule, the gentleman from
New Jersey (Mr. SMITH) and the gen-
tleman from California (Mr. LANTOS)
each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH).

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. WOLF), the author of this legislation 5 years ago, a very hard-working chairman of the Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, State, Judiciary and Related Agencies but, from my point of view, even more importantly, a leader in the area of human rights, and has been for the last 23 years as a Member of Congress.

(Mr. WOLF asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. WOLF. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH) for his leadership and the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS) for his leadership on this issue.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize, as I said the other day, every time these issues come up, it is the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH), the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. HYDE), the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS). I mean, everyone else ought to be participating in this too; but I want them to know, and Chairman HYDE too, how much I appreciate it.

But think about it, every time a bill comes up dealing with persecution and oppression, it is always those three gentlemen. Why can we not get 432 other people to come on over and join these three patriots?

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and thank the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom. This fall we celebrate the 5th year of the commission and thank them for their tireless efforts to bring awareness to religious freedom violations across the globe. Those around the world suffering persecution for the religious beliefs have truly benefited from the commitment of the commission.

The commission produces an annual report. Each report helps to bring visibility to oppressive governments that violate the basic freedoms of their citizens. The protection of human rights and the plight of those suffering for their faith must not, should not ever fall on deaf ears. Someone must fight for them.

Nameless victims in China, including Tibet, which is not part of China, although the Chinese may think it is, China, Tibet, Vietnam, Sudan, Indonesia, India, Pakistan, Vietnam, and many other places where faith is under attack are waiting for a message of hope, waiting to hear that we in the United States care.

When the United States speaks out, the Congress, the government, we can make a difference. We cannot stand idly by and watch innocent people suffer. We must not let terrible atrocities go unchallenged. We have a moral obligation to speak out.

The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom is shining a

bright light in some of the darkest corners of the world. I commend them, encourage their continued work on behalf of the oppressed and persecuted people around the globe.

Mr. Speaker, Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states:

"Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance."

I rise today to recognize and thank the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom. This fall we celebrate the fifth year of the commission and thank them for their tireless effort to bring awareness to religious freedom violations across the globe.

The commission was created by Congress in 1998 to shine a light on and generate a heightened awareness of the ongoing atrocities associated with persecution of individuals around the world for their religious beliefs.

As a result of their investigations, hearings, and reports, the commission has provided Congress and the administration with timely and accurate information on religious freedom abuses and sound policy recommendations to the president, the secretary of state, and Congress.

Those around the world suffering persecution for their religious beliefs have truly benefited from the commitment of the commission. The commission produces an annual report. Each report helps to bring visibility to oppressive governments that violate the basic freedoms of their citizens.

As an example, look at what is occurring in some of these countries:

China—According to the Cardinal Kung Foundation, there are at least 22 Roman Catholic bishops in Chinese prisons, labor camps or under house arrest. Numerous Protestant House Church leaders and worshipers in China have been imprisoned or detained. Large numbers of Muslims in China are in prison because of their faith. Young Muslim Uighur boys and girls are not even allowed to enter a mosque until they are 18 years old. Hundreds more bishops, priests, and lay people are already in prison. Torture and death are common.

Tibet—Buddhist monks and nuns are in prison and hundreds of monasteries and nunneries have been destroyed. Yet loyalty to the Dalai Lama remains strong. Despite this brutal crackdown by the government of China, the Tibetan people remain strong and cling to their heritage and unique identity.

Sudan—Millions have died in the 20-year civil war and the majority have been Christians who starved to death.

Egypt—The Coptic Christians continue to experience harassment and persecution.

Pakistan—The government has failed to protect the rights of religious minorities. Christians are persecuted and blasphemy laws are strong.

Iran—Bahais are persecuted and imprisoned because of their faith.

India—Violence is ongoing against Christians, churches are burned or destroyed, nuns raped.

Indonesia—Christian churches and Muslim mosques are attacked and burned.

Saudi Arabia—State Department annual report on human rights documents that freedom

of religion does not exist and that non-Muslim groups are not allowed to worship in public, and risk being detained, imprisoned, tortured, or deported. Conversion from Islam to another religion is punishable by death.

Vietnam—Buddhist, Protestants, Catholics and minority groups suffer intense persecution at the hands of brutal communist rulers.

It goes on and on.

The protection of human rights and the plight of those suffering for their faith must not fall on deaf ears. Someone must fight for them. Nameless victims in China, Vietnam, Sudan, Indonesia, India, Pakistan, Vietnam and the many other places where faith is under attack are waiting for a message of hope, waiting to hear that we care.

When the United States speaks out, the United States makes a difference. We cannot stand idly by and watch innocent people suffer. We must not let terrible atrocities go unchallenged. We have a moral obligation to speak out.

The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom is shining a bright light in some of the darkest corners of the world. They have made a difference over the last 5 years and continue to have an impact on the lives of the suffering people of the world. I commend them and encourage their continued work on behalf of the oppressed and persecuted people around the globe.

As the President recently stated in his speech for the National Endowment for Democracy "The bedrock of successful societies is the right to religious liberty."

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this resolution. Let me begin by commending my good friend and colleague, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. WOLF), for sponsoring this important resolution. As co-chairman of the Congressional Human Rights Caucus, Congressman WOLF has been tireless in his support for human rights and religious liberty around the globe. Without his passionate commitment and determination, we would not have passed this landmark piece of legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I would be remiss if I did not also commend the distinguished vice chairman of the Committee on International Relations, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH), my good friend, who is another tireless advocate for human rights and who was pivotal in the passage of the Religious Freedom Act.

In the 5 years since President Clinton signed the Religious Freedom Act and established the Office of International Religious Freedom and the United States Commission on Religious Freedom, huge strides have been made in making religious freedom a core objective of U.S. foreign policy.

In addition to the full-time diplomatic work of these two offices, the annual report on international religious freedom published by the State Department every year, these documents and the diplomatic efforts give hope to millions of people who are denied the ability to proclaim freely and to practice freely their faith.

The Religious Freedom Act also requires the Department of State to

name and to sanction the most egregious violators of religious freedom. This asks for the United States annually to confront governments like China, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia for their policies of religious persecution and discrimination. The Religious Freedom Act has given our government an important set of tools to use to document and confront the alarming reemergence of virulent anti-Semitism in Europe and elsewhere.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that the resolution we are considering today stresses the need to renew the commitment of the Congress to the promotion of religious liberty. Religious freedom continues to be under siege in many parts of the world, and we must rededicate ourselves to the effort to confront the violators.

Mr. Speaker, freedom of religion and conscience are the cornerstones of liberty and of democracy. That is why religion is the first freedom enumerated in our Bill of Rights. If we succeed in promoting religious liberty in the United States' foreign policy, we will not only bring an end to unfathomable human suffering, but we will also advance the development of democracy and we will promote other fundamental human rights.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all of my colleagues to support H. Res. 423.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

□ 1430

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I want to join the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS) and my good friend, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. WOLF) in support of this resolution which clearly is important to recognize the fifth anniversary of the signing of the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 because that was an historic landmark piece of legislation. And we today renew our commitment, rededicate ourselves to promoting the tolerance that was embodied in that legislation, that anyone's faith or lack of faith needs to be respected. Certainly, at a time when there is a growing intolerance, particularly in the Middle East and in places like the People's Republic of China, where we have actually seen a worsening of religious oppression, we need to speak out boldly and clearly and unambiguously for religious freedom. This legislation, the law and, the heartfelt sentiments behind it are going to be carried forward robustly to bring freedom to those persecuted for their faith.

Let me also point out that there are a number of countries that are off many people's radar screens. China, yes, we know it is bad and getting worse there, particularly as it relates to the Uyghurs—the Muslims—the Buddhists, and the Falon Gong—who are being tortured and mistreated in growing numbers, even followed by Chinese

agents into this country and harassed, which, is amazing to me—as well as the underground Catholic Church and the underground Evangelical and Christian Church. If you are not part of the officially recognized Chinese Government-controlled Church, watch out. You will be severely dealt with, particularly if you step over a very ambiguous line they have made in the sand.

Let me say that this legislation was landmark. There are countries like Turkmenistan, Cuba, Uzbekistan, Saudi Arabia, and Vietnam that have seen a deterioration, as well as Georgia, Azerbaijan, Kirgistan, Belarus and even Russia.

I would point out to my colleagues that some of the more matured democracies, like France, have seen a growing intolerance when it comes to religious expression. As a matter of fact, I spent 2 hours meeting with the prime author of their religious cults legislation and was appalled at the far-reaching nature of that legislation, to designate a body of religious belief or denomination a cult. Once branded, it comes under the severe repression of the government; and my hope is that that legislation will be junked in the near future, although I will not hold my breath. But in good countries like France, where you would expect there to be a tolerance, we see the tide going in the other direction.

As a matter of fact, the Chinese and other governments have actually looked at the French model and are looking to emulate it and to put a cover, a facade, on their own repression harkening back to that legislation.

I just want to point out to my colleagues as well, that getting here 5 years ago was not all that easy. The gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS) will remember that we went through several iterations of the language that the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. WOLF) originally introduced, always with his full concurrence and his meticulous attention to detail. The previous administration, at first, was against it. Secretary Albright and John Shattuck, the Assistant Secretary, said if we pass this, we will somehow set up a hierarchy of human rights. If ever there was a bogus argument, that was it.

When all of us joined in on passing and implementing the Jackson-Vanik amendment, we did not set up a hierarchy of human rights when it came to immigration. When many of us were against, as we all were, apartheid in South Africa and believed that sanctions were a means to that end, which I believed very strongly, that did not say we were putting racism above any other human rights. It was in addition to, not in lieu of. And, thankfully, and with the help of my friend, the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS), we were able to craft legislation that, ultimately, the Clinton Administration signed into law; and now, 5 years later, is being very, very vigorously implemented by the Bush Administration.

Let me also remind my colleagues this act created an ambassador at large, which is now being ably filled by Tom Hanford. He has a great staff. Tom Farr, who recently retired, did the yeoman's work in that position. There was not a country on the face of the Earth, there was not a religious intolerance or practice that he was not aware of, as well as the staff. They did a very good job in chronicling accurately what indeed is going on around the world. And from the basis of that chronicling, we are able to take more effective action.

We also created a Commission on International Religious Freedom, which is also staffed, as well as manned, by commissioners who are experts in the fields, and I think they are doing a tremendous job in giving us an independent look, in addition to the State Department office, as to what is going on in country after country as it relates to religious freedom.

I would just say to my colleagues that for the countries of particular concern, the designation that was created in the legislation has also been very, very useful. But I would hope, and I recently wrote, along with other Members, a letter to Secretary Colin Powell asking that some of the countries that are not on this list right now be put on it because of either their deterioration with regard to religious freedom or because they have been ongoing, egregious violators on it. And some of those countries we would like to see on the list include Turkmenistan, Saudi Arabia and Vietnam. We believe they should be designated as CPCs. Hopefully, as the analysis is done on their practices, the State Department will come to that determination.

Again, I want to thank my colleagues. When we finally got this legislation down to the White House 5 years ago after numerous hearings, rewrites and rewrites and rewrites, it was a good bipartisan product; and, again, the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS) was there every step of the way, working with us on that legislation. I actually chaired the subcommittee that worked on it. We held the hearings together and made sure that this legislation was shepherded through the House and into the Senate. But the yeoman's work was done by the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. WOLF) and I again want to single him out and say how grateful we all are for this landmark and historic piece of legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 8 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. EDWARDS), my good friend and distinguished colleague, who has been a fighter for religious freedom throughout his distinguished congressional tenure.

Mr. EDWARDS. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of House Resolution 423, which recognize the fifth anniversary of the

signing of the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998.

Religious freedom, without a doubt, should be a fundamental right of every citizen of the world. And I want to commend the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH) and the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS) for their tireless leadership in defending that right for all. This resolution urges "a renewed commitment to eliminating the violations to the internationally recognized right to freedom of religion."

I strongly agree that we should make that renewed commitment. Earlier this morning, a number of House Members, along with the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH) in the last few moments rightly criticized religious bigotry and discrimination in Vietnam, Cambodia, Afghanistan, China and other nations around the world. I applaud my colleagues for saying that the world should not tolerate torture, imprisonment or murder of people because of their personal religious faith.

I also I am deeply grateful to live in the United States, where we do not imprison citizens because their religious faith is different from others. I believe perhaps America's greatest single contribution to the world, from our experiment in democracy, is our model of religious freedom and tolerance.

The foundation of that religious freedom here is the principle of the separation of church and state embedded in the first 16 words of our Bill of Rights. "Congress shall pass no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."

In his letter to the Danbury Baptists of Connecticut in 1802, Thomas Jefferson expressed his belief that the principle of church-state separation is one of the most sacred of our founding principles. Unfortunately, many Americans today have come to perceive that separation of church and state implies disrespect for religion. Nothing could be further from the truth as Jefferson said so eloquently over a century ago.

Separation of church and state does not mean keeping people of faith out of government. It does mean keeping government out of our faith.

By passing language saying "Congress shall pass no law respecting an establishment of religion" known as the establishment clause of the Bill of Rights, our Founding Fathers were putting religion on a pedestal so high that no hand of politicians or government could reach it and control it.

Our Founding Fathers were right, separation of church and state in America has led to more religious freedom, vitality and tolerance than any nation in the world, perhaps throughout the history of the world. Most nations have gotten it wrong because they have tried to use the power of government to fund religion or to emphasize one religion or faith over another.

With government funding has come government regulation of religion, and,

ultimately, the result has been intolerance against those whose faiths are not in the majority of that country.

While I am profoundly grateful for our religious freedom in America, I am also deeply disturbed by recent Bush administration regulations and proposed laws that would limit religious freedom right here at home, the religious freedom of American citizens. It would be ironic and tragic for Members of Congress to be pushing today for more religious freedom abroad while allowing religious freedom to be limited here in America. Let me be specific.

This resolution says, "Whereas the right to freedom of religion is expressed in the declaration on the elimination of all forms of intolerance and discrimination based on religion or belief."

Instead of eliminating all forms of intolerance and discrimination based on religious belief, the Bush administration actually supports using Federal tax dollars to subsidize religious discrimination. This is known as the so-called Charitable Choice proposals. Under Bush administration proposals, an American citizen can be fired from a Federally-funded job solely because of his or her personal religious faith.

Now, let me repeat that. Under Bush administration proposals, an American citizen can be fired from a Federally-funded, tax-supported job for no other reason than that person's religious faith. The administration, for example, would allow a group that associated with Bob Jones University to accept \$1 million in job training funds and \$1 million tax dollars, your dollars and mine. And then with some of that money put out a sign that says, no Jews or Catholics need apply here to this Federally-funded job.

That is offensive, and it is outrageous, and it should not be allowed in America. To allow and to actually subsidize such religious discrimination when using American tax dollars is wrong, and it is unconstitutional.

We all know why, for example, a Baptist Church can hire a Baptist minister with their own money to carry out the church's own spiritual mission. However, long-standing Federal policy has been when organizations receive Federal tax dollars to run social service programs, not religious programs, they cannot discriminate in job hiring based simply on a person's religious faith. Yet, President Bush's administration wants to change that policy for billions of tax dollars and for potentially hundreds of thousands jobs. For example, the administration wants to contract out, privatize up to 850,000 present Federal jobs. And in that proposal, they say a group accepting millions of dollars, totaling billions if you add them all up, for hundreds of thousands of jobs, that those groups receiving our tax dollars, and say I am not hiring you because you do not pass my personal religious test.

I believe the administration position flies in the face of this resolution

today, the Bill of Rights and Americans' personal religious freedom. No American citizen should have to pass any other person's religious test to qualify for a tax-funded job.

Mr. Speaker, it is right for House Members to stand up for religious freedom in other nations as we are today, but I would suggest we should more carefully examine how Bush administration policies will lead to religious discrimination right here at home. If Americans are denied the right to a Federally-funded job, the opportunity and effect to feed their families simply because someone else did not like their personal religious faith, then those Americans are clearly being denied the free exercise of their religious freedom.

Perhaps most Americans to date have not been concerned about these so-called charitable choice provisions, first because they probably were not aware that these proposals have been made by the administration; and, second, most Americans think that the 1st amendment protects our religious freedom so no one can threaten it. But in the years ahead, if the Bush administration charitable choice proposals continue to be implemented as they are being done right now, dozens, then hundreds, and ultimately thousands of Americans will be denied a tax-funded job single my because of their personal faith.

□ 1445

I project that Americans will be outraged to find out that this United States Congress, the same Members who are voting to push religious freedom in other nations, the right thing to do, are voting to deny religious freedom and to subsidize with tax dollars job discrimination against Americans based on their religious faith.

While we are right to condemn religious discrimination in other nations, we should stop subsidizing religious discrimination here in America. Religious freedom is a cherished right for all American citizens. Congress has a responsibility on a bipartisan basis to stop the Bush administration proposals, which would put that right at risk for thousands and thousands of American citizens. If we are going to preach religious freedom to other nations, perhaps we should also practice it here at home.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. SCOTT), my good friend and distinguished colleague.

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for yielding me the time.

Mr. Speaker, I have the honor of serving in this body as a Representative from Virginia, the home State of James Madison and Thomas Jefferson who authored the statute on religious freedom which served as a model for the religious freedom provisions in our Bill of Rights. So I am pleased to rise in support of H. Res. 423, recognizing

the fifth anniversary of the signing of the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 and urging renewed commitment to eliminating violations of the internationally recognized right to freedom of religion and protecting fundamental human rights.

I want to thank my distinguished colleague from Virginia (Mr. WOLF) for his sponsorship of this resolution.

I agree with the provisions, the whereas in this resolution: whereas religious freedom is an absolute right and all people are entitled to do with their own souls as they choose; whereas the right of freedom of religion is expressed in the declaration on the elimination of all forms of intolerance and discrimination based on religion or belief adopted and proclaimed by the United Nations and many other organizations; whereas freedom of all individuals to adopt, believe, worship, observe, teach and practice a religion individually or collectively has been explicitly articulated; whereas religious persecution is not confined to a country, a region, or a regime; but whereas all governments should provide and protect religious liberty. I agree with all of those principles, but I feel compelled to point out that this House has not always followed the principles articulated in the resolution.

For example, just a few months ago, this House in the Head Start reauthorization bill, by a very close vote rejected the long-standing principle that teachers could not be fired or denied employment solely because of their religious belief. Instead, we adopted a provision which allows the 8 percent of the Head Start programs which are faith-based to discriminate based on religion, with Federal money, not the church money, but with the Federal money. Ironically, that vote to allow the discrimination came one day after congressional leaders participated in a ceremony praising the 40th anniversary of the March on Washington. Ironical because one of the few articulated purposes and successes of the March on Washington was a prohibition against employment discrimination with Federal money.

Head Start, since inception, has prohibited employment discrimination based on religion, and hopefully the Senate will reject the House action and reaffirm the prohibitions against discrimination with the Federal money.

So, Mr. Speaker, as we celebrate the International Religious Freedom Act and condemn religious intolerance, we ought to renew our own commitment to that principle here in the United States and condemn efforts to allow employment discrimination with Federal money based solely on religious beliefs.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. FRANKS), my good friend and colleague.

Mr. FRANKS of Arizona. Mr. Speaker, it has now been 5 years since the

International Religious Freedom Act was signed into law, and our view of the world has changed very dramatically since then due to a number of factors, primarily September 11 and the war against terrorism. The fundamental right of religious freedom is one of the very most critical foundations of this Republic.

Mr. Speaker, we must never forget that our Nation was founded by those who fled their country to preserve the inalienable right to religious liberty; and throughout the history of our Nation, people have left their homes in the cover of night to escape to the United States due to the religious persecution in their own countries. Unfortunately, in many places in the world today, the right to choose and practice one's faith is still not protected.

Mr. Speaker, it is so vitally imperative that we as a Nation continue to work to eliminate violations of religious freedom and human rights. One of the most compelling and pressing issues at this moment, and one where we have a great deal of leverage, is our responsibility to help establish true freedom in Afghanistan and Iraq. True freedom in those nations is absolutely impossible apart from provisions in their new constitutions that absolutely guarantee full religious freedom for every one of their people.

Our principal efforts in those countries, if we do nothing else, must center on preserving the right of religious freedom for every individual. It is critical, Mr. Speaker, even to the war on terrorism because constitutionally guaranteed religious freedom creates a vital framework for discussion and debate. It has the power to turn the war of weapons into a war of words. May we not forget that critical truth.

Mr. Speaker, Patrick Henry stated it this way. He said, "I have but one lamp by which my feet are guided, and that is the lamp of experience. I know of no way of judging the future but by the past." He understood the urgency and nature of the battle when he declared, "There is no longer any room for hope. If we wish to be free, if we mean to preserve inviolate those inestimable privileges for which we have been so long engaged, and which we have pledged ourselves never to abandon until the glorious object of our contest shall be obtained, we must fight!"

Mr. Speaker, indeed, we have fought but we now must ask ourselves what it was we were truly fighting for. I believe we fought, as President Bush said, for the "advance of freedom" because "we believe that freedom, the freedom we prize, is not for us alone; it is the right and capacity of all mankind." Guided by the lamp of our own experience of our own Nation, in those words, the President makes the most compelling argument that I can imagine for the United States to renew its commitment to eliminating violations of the right to religious freedom and to protecting fundamental human rights for every human being across the world.

Mr. PAUL. Mr. Speaker, I rise to oppose this legislation but want to make it clear that I am not doing so because I oppose religious freedom, as one might falsely conclude from the way this bill is crafted. My concerns with this bill are the same concerns I raise whenever Congress attempts to act in areas in which it has no constitutional authority: under the guise of promoting a laudable cause—religious freedom—this legislation seeks to impose our views of this topic on other sovereign nations. In short, it is yet another example of the U.S. meddling in the affairs of other countries.

Mr. Speaker, as Americans we have a special attachment to the idea of religious freedom. That is the reason many of our ancestors came to this land and fought for independence. But I don't think the way to advance religious freedom around the world is to demand that every country adopt our approach. I believe that so demanding will only engender ill-will toward the United States and, ironically, increased resistance to this idea. People generally to not like being told by foreign countries what to do or how they can worship. I believe the best way we can promote the idea of religious liberty abroad is to serve as a working, living example of the benefits of liberty. The United States has been admired historically in other countries because our system of government demonstrates the economic and other benefits of liberty. That is why other nations seek to emulate the United States, not because we demand that their religious laws conform to our notions of what is acceptable.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, we have no additional requests for time, and I yield back the balance of our time.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, we have no further requests for speakers, and I yield back the balance of our time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. OSE). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 423, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds of those present have voted in the affirmative.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

FAIRNESS TO CONTACT LENS CONSUMERS ACT

Mr. BURR. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 3140) to provide for availability of contact lens prescriptions to patients, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 3140

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Fairness to Contact Lens Consumers Act".